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Merely Anne Marie

—BY—

BEULAH KING



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—PUBLISHED BY—

ELDRIDGE ENTERTAINMENT HOUSE,
FRANKLIN, OHIO DENVER, COLO.

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Cast of Characters

†

MRS. TEAGUE

LURA WIMPLE

CLEMENT HALE

MRS. CLEMENT HALE

CLARENCE PRATT

JOHN ARTHUR CARRINGTON

BELINDA MANNERS

ANNE MARIE PERKINS

Time: The Present

Locality: Any Country Town

STAGE DIRECTIONS

As seen by a performer on the stage facing the audience, R. means right hand; L., left hand; C. D., door at center; D. L., door at left; up towards back of stage; down, toward footlights.

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COSTUMES AND CHARACTERISTICS

Mrs. Teague—A stout, kind-hearted woman of fifty, with a bustling manner and harsh voice. Wears a plain, black dress.

Lura Wimple—A thin spinster of forty-five, with a sad, preoccupied manner. A woman of excellent taste and refinement, but with an almost ridiculous love of romance. Dresses simply but well.

Clement Hale—A rough, good-hearted fellow of sixty, who is never so happy as when making jokes at the expense of his wife. Wears a business suit.

Mrs. Clement Hale—Proud, buxom and fifty. Dresses showily.

Mr. Clarence Pratt—Ashamed of himself for being contented. Humble and in love. About forty-eight. Wears a plain business suit.

Anne Marie Perkins—Tall, slender; an odd type. She has a certain sad tolerance of her surroundings but a wonderful enthusiasm for life. About 20. Wears a gingham dress and apron in the first two acts; in the last an artistic creation of simple lines that shows to advantage her really fine figure.

John Arthur Carrington—Lean, tall and fine-looking, not in the theatrical sense. Wears business suit and sport clothes of excellent taste. A bit temperamental and susceptible, but with it all a very fine young man.

Belinda Manners—A beautiful girl of twenty-five, possessing the clothes and accessories of a beauty. Spoiled to within an inch of her life and affected.

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Merely Anne Marie

ACT I.

Scene—The dining room at Mrs. Teague's boarding house. At the rear center a swinging door leading into the kitchen. In the right wall center, double doors leading into the front hall. In the center of the stage, a dining table (square) with three chairs along the further side and one at the right end, another at the left. Against the right wall a sideboard. In the rear wall to the right and left of the swinging door, china closets filled with china. Down left, a serving table. At rise of curtain, the stage is empty.

(Enter Anne Marie, C. D. She takes the centerpiece from the dining room table, folds it and places it in a drawer of the sideboard, from which she takes a table cloth. She comes back to the table, starts to unfold the table cloth, stops as if some new thought had suddenly taken possession of her and stands staring into space. After a few seconds Mrs. Teague's voice from kitchen.)

Mrs. T.—Anne Marie! (Anne Marie comes from her reverie.)

Mrs. T.—Are you dreaming?

A. M.—(going to the china closet) Not now, Mrs. Teague. (She takes out plates, etc., and begins setting the table.)

Mrs. T.—It's five o'clock and you've got the salad to make.

A. M.—(as she lays the plates) Miss Wimple, Mrs. Clement Hale, Mr. Clement Hale, Mr. Pratt, Mrs. Teague.

(Enter Miss Wimble, d. l.)

Miss W.—(woefully) Oh, Anne Marie, do talk to me. I've one of my moody days. (*She flops into a chair.*) I've been longing for things that will never come to me.

A. M.—(kindly) What shall I talk about, Miss Wimble?

Miss W.—Any of your nonsense.

A. M.—(laughing) Will you have a tale of romance that ends well or a thrilling one that doesn't?

Miss W.—(shyly) If you don't mind, I'd like to hear about the prince.

A. M.—(with enthusiasm) Ah—the prince! The prince of the House of Teague.

Miss W.—(always cautious) S-sh!

A. M.—Have you wished for him? Wished with all the power of your being? (*Miss W. nods fervently.*)

Miss W.—The ouija told me he would come—very soon.

A. M.—Ah! Perhaps tonight.

Miss W.—(tense) Will we know him when he comes?

A. M.—(more to herself) I shall know him.

Miss W.—(plaintively) I don't feel so certain about myself.

A. M.—I shall *feel* his presence. If twenty men come to Mrs. Teague's for board and room and he is among them I shall know him.

Miss W.—Oh, dear! I've kind of lost faith in myself since—since I mistook Mr. Pratt for the prince.

A. M.—That's because he looked like one and how were you to know he was a dry goods clerk with those features?

Miss W.—Ah, to be sure.

A. M.—Mind you, I'm not saying the prince will be handsome.

Miss W.—(trying not to be disappointed) No-o.

A. M.—Beauty is weakness in a man.

Miss W.—(wishing she could believe it) Of course.

A. M.—*(gesturing freely)* But the prince will have the grand manner, and a twinkle in his eye. Oh, no! Miss Wimple, he's no rosy youth, this prince. He's a man with a knowledge of human nature and the poise of a thousand drawing rooms, and a tongue of a teller of tales. Perhaps—perhaps he has sounded the depths!

Miss W.—What?

A. M.—Perhaps he has sounded the depths. You have to, you know, to scale the heights.

(Mrs. Teague's voice from the kitchen.)

Mrs. T.—Anne Marie, are you dreaming?

A. M.—*(running for the knives and forks in side-board drawer)* No—Mrs. Teague, I'm arranging the silver. *(To Miss W.)* I call it the silver, but really it's plate. *(With a sigh.)* In fact I call many things here falsely. I have to. *(Arranging knives and forks.)* I have always looked upon Mrs. Teague's boarding house as a palace.

Miss W.—(aghast) Palace! Good heavens!

A. M.—That's how I happened to call him the prince—the Prince of the House of Teague.

Miss W.—I often wondered.

A. M.—Of course, Mrs. Teague is the queen. She's not much like one, but after all, she has a chief characteristic. She's tyrannical.

Miss W.—Oh, my!

A. M.—Mr. Clement Hale is chancellor. He looks the part, and really he's a very wise man. His wife is the beggar maid who won him.

Miss W.—Why, Anne Marie!

A. M.—Well, don't you think she's rather high and mighty and fusses a great deal about the service here? People that have had nothing are always the most difficult to suit, you know. Mr. Pratt is court jester.

Miss W.—(who really admires his looks) Jester! Why—he—he is too handsome for that.

A. M.—I went by opposites in his case. (*With a sigh.*) I had to, to make him interesting at all.

Miss W.—Well, of all things!

A. M.—If you sell white goods all day, you can't be interesting.

Miss W.—No, I suppose not. (*Whispering.*) Still, I have often wondered if he had a past.

A. M.—(*thoughtfully*) Perhaps he has, but I doubt it.

Miss W.—He would be quite perfect if he had a past.

A. M.—Do you think so?

Miss W.—(*afraid of A. M.'s scorn*) Well, of course—I—

A. M.—Do you know, I think he rather likes you?

Miss W.—(*very quickly*) Oh, my soul!

A. M.—He does. I can tell by the way he looks at you.

Miss W.—You—you have quite upset me.

(Enter c. d. *Mrs. Teague*. She has a letter in her hand and is excited.)

Mrs. T.—I've had a letter!

Miss W.—Oh, I hope it's not distressing.

Mrs. T.—It's a bit upsetting. (*In a whisper.*) A noted character wants me to take him to board.

Miss W.—Oh, my! A noted character!

Mrs. T.—John Arthur Carrington. He writes plays!

(*A. M. flops into the nearest chair, quite overcome with the excitement of it.*)

Mrs. T.—There, Anne Marie, go right out and wash the lettuce. Go!

(*With a sigh, A. M. gets up and goes off c. d.*)

Mrs. T.—I shouldn't have told her I suppose. She won't be good for anything now. I have to be careful

what I tell her. She has such an imagination! (*adjusting her glasses and looking at the letter.*) It seems my cousin knows the housekeeper at Crestville—a Mrs. Lee. (*With due reverence.*) Crestville is the country house of the Dwight Carringtons.

Miss W.—The Dwight Carringtons! What a grand name!

Mrs. T.—Mary writes that Mrs. Lee says the poor fellow is driven nearly crazy by the attentions of his relatives. They're that proud of him. And he wants to get away from them in some quiet spot where he is not to be bothered. She writes my house is just the place for him and asks me to let him have a couple rooms in the third story.

Miss W.—Oh, the third story!

Mrs. T.—It seems he is now stopping at the Tavern—has been there three days, tramping the country on snowshoes.

Miss W.—Think of that!

Mrs. T.—He's coming to see me about the rooms tonight. Good lord! I'm glad I've had a little warning. (*Quickly.*) Not but what I've always had very nice people here—select people for that matter, but you know—he's different.

Miss W.—Of course! He writes plays!

(*A clock in the hall strikes six. The front door slams.*)

Mrs. T.—Good lord! It's six o'clock!

(*She hurries off c. d. as Mr. Pratt enters d. l.*)

Miss W.—(*on seeing him*) Oh—oh—oh! (*in quick succession*) You'll pardon me, I'm sure.

Mr. Pratt—Pardon you?

Miss W.—For being here!

Mr. P.—(*looking straight at her*) But you have a perfect right to be here. And, besides, I'm glad you are.

Miss W.—Oh, don't look at me like that—please—I—I shall die!

Mr. P.—(puzzled) How do I look at you?

(Enter A. M. c. d. with the bread and butter. They stand as if transfixed while she places the things on the table and goes out.)

Mr. P.—How do I look at you?

Miss W.—(fluttering) I—I don't know.

Mr. P.—(plunging) Miss Wimple, I am a lonely man. I don't like boarding houses. I want a home of my own.

(Enter A. M. with milk and preserves. They stand as before until she has gone off.)

Mr. P.—A house that's neat and cozy and kept in order by a little woman, who—Miss Wimple, I am asking you to be my wife. Will you?

Miss W.—I—I—

Mr. P.—Think of a little home of our own—a little home that I could come to at night and find my slippers waiting for me before the fire.

Miss W.—(seeing no romance in this) Oh, no, no, no! It couldn't be. I—I would never be happy.

Mr. P.—Don't tell me that!

(Enter A. M. with salad and cold meat. They stand as before until she goes off.)

Mr. P.—(trying to take her hand) Don't you care for me? Don't you want a little home with me? Is it possible you can like this place?

Miss W.—No—no—I do not like it. I am lonely and unhappy, but—

Mr. P.—But what?

Miss W.—I like other things.

Mr. P.—(puzzled) Other things?

Miss W.—(quoting A. M.) I want more than a house to keep in order, more than a husband who is just ordinary; more than the simple life.

Mr. P.—(crushed) I wish I might give them to you.

(Enter A. M. with tea and hot water. They stand as before while A. M. places things and goes off d. l. to summon the boasters.)

Mr. P.—Is there nothing I can say to win you?

Miss W.—(faintly) Nothing

Mr. P.—(with conviction) There is another?

Miss W.—(more faintly) Yes.

Mr. P.—Ah, then it is hopeless. You are to marry him?

Miss W.—No—no—I—

Mr. P.—Who is he?

Miss W.—Oh, oh, oh! How can I explain?

Mr. P.—I suppose he is a charmer.

Miss W.—He is a prince!

(She goes off all a-flutter at d. l. Mr. P. stands there puzzled.)

(Enter d. l. Mr. and Mrs. Clement Hale, followed by A. M.)

(Enter Mrs. T. c. d.)

Mrs. H.—(taking center chair of the three along farther side of the table) My dear Mrs. Teague, salad again? Delightful!

Mr. H.—How can a woman rave over a conglomeration of stuff set on a green leaf is beyond me.

Mrs. H.—(duly shocked) My dear!

(Mr. H. takes the chair at his wife's left. Mrs. T. takes the chair on the right end of table and Mr. P. opposite her on the left. A. M. stands by serving table.)

Mrs. T.—It's well we don't all like meat in these hard times. Where would I be? (She begins to serve.)

Mrs. H.—Clement eats far too much meat. (to Mr. H.) Meat, my dear, makes one a fighter.

Mr. H.—(with a wink at A. M.) One needs to be a fighter in this world.

Mrs. T.—(looking toward vacant chair) Where is

Miss Wimple? Anne Marie, run up and find out what's the matter with her.

(*A. M. goes off d. l.*)

Mrs. T.—(continuing) She was all right a few minutes ago. But there, you never can tell what will take her appetite. She's that dainty, and finicky. Good lord! I suppose the butter wasn't set even on the plate.

(*Mr. P. keeps his head down.*)

*Mrs. H.—*I can understand how she feels about such things. When one has been used to a great deal it is hard to come down.

*Mr. H.—*Not half so hard as when one has been used to nothing.

Mr. P.—(bravely) Was Miss Wimble ever rich?

Mrs. T.—(with sarcasm) Not rich—but aristocratic.

Mr. P.—(with reverence) Ah—aristocratic!

*Mrs. T.—*And such ideas!

Mr. H.—Umph!

*Mrs. T.—*She wants the best and lord knows how she's going to get it on an income of one thousand a year.

*Mrs. H.—*She should marry a millionaire.

Mrs. T.—(scornfully) A millionaire wouldn't suit her. He's got to have more than money—that man of hers.

*Mr. H.—*But what right has she I'd like to know—an old wizened spinster (*Mr. P. gasps*) to demand so much? What has she to offer?

Mrs. H.—Hush!

(*Enter A. M. d. l.*)

Mrs. T.—(turning to A. M.) Well?

*A. M.—*Miss Wimble doesn't want any supper.

(*Mr. P. drops his knife and fork.*)

*Mrs. T.—*What's the matter?

*A. M.—*She seems much upset—in fact, she's weeping.

Mrs. T.—Does she want anything sent up?

A. M.—(dramatically) She says she feels as if she never wanted to taste food again!

Mrs. T.—There! I suppose she's got the grip and I'll have to tend out on her, just when I've a new boarder coming.

(*A. M. goes to serving table as before.*)

Mrs. H.—You've a new boarder coming?

Mrs. T.—(with importance) Yes—Mr. Carrington. He's been staying at the Tavern and he's to come here for a month or so.

(*A. M. becomes attentive.*)

Mrs. H.—Carrington? Carrington?

Mrs. T.—(with more importance) Yes, of the Carringtons.

Mr. P.—(suddenly) Is he married?

Mrs. T.—He is not married.

Mr. P.—A millionaire?

Mrs. H.—Is it possible, my dear Mr. Pratt, you have never heard of the Carringtons? They were born to millions from time immemorial.

Mr. H.—In heaven's name, what is he doing here? After Anne Marie, I'll wager. It's quite the fad among the millionaire set to marry out of their class. Ahem! It used to be in my day. (*Mrs. H. is ill at ease.*)

Mrs. H.—More meat, Clement?

Mr. H.—No, my dear, not even meat can stop me from saying a thing, if I desire to say it.

Mr. P.—You say he is to stay only a month?

Mrs. T.—(touchily) I did.

Mr. P.—Does he come soon?

Mrs. T.—Tonight, for all I know.

Mrs. H.—Tonight? He couldn't get a car out tonight. The paths aren't broken.

Mrs. T.—Car? He ain't got a car. He's on snowshoes.

Mrs. H.—Oh! A bit eccentric! Well, I suppose one can afford to be eccentric when one has millions.

Mr. H.—Bah! What is there eccentric about going out on a pair of snowshoes when one can't go with comfort any other way. I call it downright common sense.

(*A. M. removes plates while Mrs. T. helps to the preserves.*)

Mrs. T.—(*thoughtfully*) I shouldn't wonder but what he is a bit eccentric, as you say, and so I'll take an opportunity right here to ask you, all of you, not to feel offended if you think he don't treat you quite as you think he should.

Mrs. H.—Um—snobbish, I suppose. Well, there are others that have a right to be snobbish, too.

Mrs. T.—No, he ain't snobbish. That ain't the word at all. (*in a reverential whisper.*) He writes plays!

Mr. H.—Ah!

Mrs. H.—He writes plays?

Mrs. T.—He writes plays!

Mrs. H.—How divine!

Mr. H.—That depends. Some of the modern plays are anything but divine.

Mrs. H.—What kind of plays does he write?

Mrs. T.—(*not in the least knowing what she is saying*) They say—high comedy!

Mr. H.—(*with a chuckle*) High Jinks.

Mrs. T.—(*still quoting*) He is the author of two plays that ran on Broadway two seasons. He's made a million.

Mrs. H.—(*tremulo*) Think of that. Isn't that wonderful? Gifted, unmarried, and worth a million.

(*Mr. P. stares sadly into space.*)

Mr. H.—I don't know how it is to be gifted or to be worth a million, but I have memories of how it is to be

unmarried and I dub him lucky, just for that.

Mrs. H.—Clement, dear! (*to others*) He doesn't mean half he says.

Mr. H.—Don't I? Any man that's single and gets married, takes an awful chance.

Mrs. H.—Clement—dear! Please!

Mr. H.—Don't get excited, my dear. I'm not being personal. I'm just talking in a general way. Take Mr. Pratt, here. If he isn't the living example of the happiness of an unmarried man I'd like to see you find a better proof. (*Mr. P. becomes ill at ease.*) He's wise, too. He's no notion of changing his lot in life. He's a bachelor and he intends to remain so.

Mr. P.—(*rising*) I—I beg to be excused. I—I have a letter to get off on this mail. (*He bolts off d. l.* *The others stare after him.*)

Mrs. H.—There, Clement, you've frightened him to death.

A. M.—(*suddenly*) I should think Mr. Hale might frighten him. He proposed to Miss Wimple tonight.

Mrs. T.—What?

A. M.—Yes—he did.

Mrs. H.—Heavens! What does he see in her?

Mrs. T.—(*to A. M.*) Did she refuse him?

A. M.—I think not—exactly. She—she ran out of the room.

Mrs. T.—Of course she'll take him and there'll be another room vacant.

A. M.—I don't think so. I don't believe she'll have him.

Mr. H.—Ha, ha, ha! Don't you fool yourself, my dear. She's not so young as you.

A. M.—(*seriously*) But she loves another.

Mrs. T.—(*aghast*) What!!

A. M.—(*seriously*) She loves an ideal.

Mrs. H.—Then she's sure to remain single.

Mrs. T.—He's rather handsome.

A. M.—But he has no brains.

Mrs. T.—Anne Marie! Good lord! The young people of today. They're so fussy about a man. He's got to be this and that and a hundred other things before he's even considered. In my day a girl took her beau for granted and married him, and there was nothing more to it. Such notions!

Mr. H.—They took too much for granted in those days.

Mrs. T.—I'm sure I never picked poor Teague so to pieces. I took him for what he was and made the best of it. Miss Wimple can do the same.

A. M.—The trouble is Mr. Pratt has so few possibilities. He's too contented.

Mrs. T.—Good heavens! Contentment was the gift of heaven in my day.

A. M.—And he's very ordinary.

Mrs. T.—There now, hear the child will you? The angel Gabriel wouldn't suit her.

A. M.—(*seriously*) No, I don't believe he would. He's too naive.

Mr. H.—Ha, ha, ha! I'll wager Mephistopheles in a dress suit would.

Mrs. H.—There, there, Clement, you've gone far enough.

Mrs. T.—Where the child gets her ideas from is more than I can see. Her parents were ordinary enough, but ever since the day I took her into my house she's showed signs of being different. Used to sit on the attic stairs and talk to her other self.

Mr. H.—Wanted to be sure of talking to a lady, didn't you, Anne Marie?

Mrs. T.—All I can say is, Miss Wimple might do a lot worse. Anne Marie, get me some hot water.

(*A. M. goes off c. d.*)

Mrs. T.—The child has a strange influence over Miss Wimple. I believe—yes, I believe she could do anything with her.

Mrs. H.—I always thought Anne Marie was uncanny.

Mr. H.—That's nothing to what she thinks of you, I'll wager. (*Chuckles.*)

Mrs. T.—I suppose she's put some foolish idea into Miss Wimple's head about a perfect man. Well, she can take it from me—there ain't no such animal. But Miss Wimple's just foolish enough to believe her.

(Enter *A. M.*)

Mrs. T.—(*taking the hot water A. M. offers her*) Thank you. Now, sit down, child, and eat your supper. I've a lot to do fixing those two rooms for Mr. Carrington and you'll have to do the dishes alone, tonight.

Mrs. H.—(*rising*) Oh, then he's to have both rooms.

Mrs. T.—(*rising*) Yes, he specifies a bedroom and study.

(*A. M. slips into Mrs. T.'s place and begins her supper.*)

Mrs. H.—That leaves no extra room. I thought if my niece should come—

Mrs. T.—(*quickly*) Well, I'll give her Anne Marie's room and Anne Marie can sleep on the cot in mine.

Mrs. H.—There! I'm relieved, because the child may take it into her head to come any time. She's accustomed to acting just as she feels.

Mr. H.—(*rising*) She'll learn better bye and bye. (*coming to A. M.*) Have I left enough for you, Anne Marie?

(*Mrs. H. and Mrs. T. talk.*)

A. M.—Oh, plenty, thank you.

Mr. H.—You've got the appetite of a sparrow and you're poor as a crow.

A. M.—It's stylish to be thin. All the gowns are cut for slender figures.

Mr. H.—Ha, ha! What do you know about styles away down here in this country place? By Jove you are uncanny. Wait until Mrs. Clement Hale's niece arrives; then you'll learn a thing or two about style.

A. M.—(*fearfully*) Is she beautiful?

Mr. H.—Considered so; but between you and me, I'd rather your face and figure a hundred times. Ah, ha! that doesn't please you does it, coming from an old duffer like me, but I've seen a few girls in my time, my dear, and I know a thoroughbred when I see her and I call you one. You've got the look my dear.

Mrs. H.—Come, Clement, it's time for cribbage.

Mr. H.—Yes—yes. (*She takes his arm and they go off d. l.*)

Mrs. T.—I'm going up to the third story to make ready a few things. If anyone comes you can call me.

(*Mrs. T. starts toward door left.*)

A. M.—Mrs. Teague?

Mrs. T.—(*turning*) Yes.

A. M.—Did you ever know a playwright?

Mrs. T.—No, but my sister met one once. Why?

A. M.—Nothing.

(*Mrs. T. goes off d. l. Anne Marie sits a moment, toying with her fork. Presently the kitchen door is heard to slam. Anne Marie starts up from her chair, facing center door.*)

(Enter Carrington center door. He wears sport clothes and has a pair of snowshoes slung over his back.)

(They stare at each other a moment without a word or movement.)

Carrington—Pardon me for walking in. I didn't attempt it until I'd proved your bell was out of order.

A. M.—Oh!

Car.—This is Mrs. Teague's very desirable boarding house, isn't it?

A. M.—Yes.

Car.—I believe I'm to have a room here.

A. M.—Two rooms. (*Wondering whence her voice comes.*)

Car.—Ah! Two rooms!

A. M.—A bedroom and a study.

Car.—Where is the lady of the house? May I see her?

A. M.—Certainly. She's upstairs. I'll call her. Will you go in the parlor?

Car.—Must I? I don't like parlors.

A. M.—I—I think she would rather have you.

Car.—Just as you wish.

(*She goes to d. l. He follows.*)

(*Enter Mrs. T., d. l.*)

(*She "takes him in" professionally.*)

Mrs. T.—(*with satisfaction*) Ah!

Car.—Mrs. Teague?

Mrs. T.—(*in her best manner*) Yes, and I'm sure this is Mr. Carrington. I'm delighted. Do come into the parlor. (*She goes off. He follows.*) Everything's ready for you. I've done all—

(*Anne Marie comes back to table and stands smiling to herself for a moment.*)

A. M.—The Prince. It is the Prince! (*She takes teapot and hot water and goes off c. d., as curtain falls.*)

CURTAIN

ACT II.

Time—Two mornings later.

Scene—*Mr. Carrington's sitting room. In the rear wall, center, a door leading into the corridor. In the right wall, center, a door hung with a curtain, leading into the bedroom. In the left wall, two windows overlooking the road. To the right of the rear door a whatnot littered with bricabrac. Down stage left, a comfortable but somewhat shabby davenport set cornerwise. Between the windows, a table desk with typewriter, papers, books, etc. Down stage right a comfortable old chair in sad contrast with the other highly polished stiff backed chairs set along the walls.*

Discovered, Mr. Carrington. He has just closed the center door behind Mrs. T., who has been making a little friendly call. He comes down stage with an air of relief, lights his pipe and pulls forward the one comfortable chair, preparatory to a quiet, meditative smoke, but it is not so to be, for when he moves the chair, Anne Marie, in a miserable heap is revealed to him.

Car.—Good heavens!

A. M.—Oh! (*She stands up.*)

Car.—(*sternly*) Do you think that's a nice thing to do?

A. M.—No—I think it's detestable.

Car.—So you do detestable things deliberately?

A. M.—(*never sure of herself*) I must.

Car.—You were here all the while I was talking to Mrs. Teague?

A. M.—Yes.

Car.—You came to spy?

A. M.—(*coming down stage*) I came because I like the sound of your voice.

Car.—(*following her*) Who are you?

A. M.—I am Anne Marie Perkins, a sort of adopted daughter of Mrs. Teague.

(*Suddenly she faces him and laughs.*)

Car.—(*uneasily*) What are you laughing at?

A. M.—The high and mighty manner of you. I think I might say who are *you*?

Car.—(*stiffly*) You evidently know if you have been listening.

A. M.—Oh, I knew before you came. I know everything about you.

Car.—Indeed?

A. M.—The only excitement I have is the new boarders.

Car.—I'm sorry to disappoint you, because I'm not the least exciting.

A. M.—You write plays!

Car.—Ah, I see! You thought I was to have a theater strapped to my back. Well, I'm deucedly sorry to disappoint you. If I had known of this—er—keen interest of yours, I would have stayed at home rather than disappoint you.

A. M.—Now, you're being sarcastic. Well, I suppose I ought to feel flattered to think you'd use sarcasm on me. To think you wouldn't feel it was wasted.

Car.—I didn't think of you one way or another.

A. M.—No, I suppose not. (*Looks about the room.*) How do you like your sitting room?

Car.—So-so.

A. M.—I had one awful tussle with Mrs. Teague to get this davenport here; and that chair (*indicating the comfortable one*) but I persisted. I knew you'd like them. You do, don't you?

Car.—Very much.

A. M.—(*smoothing the upholstery*) The davenport's rather shabby, but it's substantial and forty times more comfortable than the parlor settee she had for you.

Car.—I don't doubt it.

A. M.—Mrs. Teague isn't a bit artistic.

Car.—Um-um.

A. M.—She likes parlor sets and easels if you'll believe it.

Car.—I do. (*Sits on the arm of the chair.*)

A. M.—She wanted to put an easel in here and a picture on it of Mr. Teague.

Car.—The Saints forbid.

A. M.—I removed a lot of the superfluous bricabrac too.

Car.—I see I'm frightfully indebted to you.

A. M.—(*leaning on the back of the davenport*) Well, it's this way. You can't work so well in an uncongenial atmosphere—that is, unless you are a genius.

Car.—You don't consider me a genius, then?

A. M.—No—not exactly. That is, I couldn't imagine you writing in a cold garret, hungry, and with the light of one solitary candle. The divine fire doesn't burn in you to the oblivion^o of physical discomfort.

Car.—(*raising his brows in genuine surprise*) Really?

A. M.—I surprise you? (*with a sigh*) Well, I surprise myself. Mrs. Teague thinks I'm queer. In fact, I imagine they all think so.

Car.—Oh, no.

A. M.—Thank you for that emphatic denial.

Car.—I made it emphatic on purpose. I know what you're up against.

A. M.—(*going to him*) You—you know? They have called you queer?

Car.—Many times.

(*She regards him earnestly.*)

A. M.—Oh—I—I can bear it better, now.

Car.—(*bending toward her*) But we know *they're* the queer ones, don't we? (*They laugh.*)

A. M.—Oh, you are so wonderful! I—I feel so at home with you. At last I have found a kindred spirit.

Car.—Then there are no kindred spirits at Mrs. Teague's.

A. M.—I'm afraid not, although they all think they are. Miss Wimple adores romance and likes a good story but she has no sense of humor.

Car.—That's bad.

A. M.—Very. Neither has Mrs. Teague nor Mr. Pratt. Mrs. Clement Hale is a type and Mr. Clement Hale is a lot nicer and more interesting than he'll let people know.

Car.—I wonder just how you'd catalogue me.

A. M.—Oh, I don't think you'd object to the way at all.

Car.—No?

A. M.—I wouldn't catalogue you as a saint. No writer has much use for a saint. You see there would be no plots in the world if we were all saints, and the writer would lose his job. (*Smiles.*) I should class you as a man who knew the worst of things—because the truth is often the worst—and yet could smile and have faith. (*Archly.*) That—that is my idea of a man!

Car.—And you have been waiting for him?

A. M.—All my life.

Car.—But that's not long.

A. M.—You are laughing at me. Please don't. When I was a child he was my father. When I grew up he took the form of a cavalier. He rode a black horse with silver trappings. How grand he was! Then he became just a man—a man with a twinkle in his eye, a man who was sure of himself always. (*Bowing in a grand manner*) I am happy to meet you monsieur!

Car.—Ah, you misjudge me! Perhaps I have a twinkle in my eye, but I'm wickedly morose at times, and alas! I am never sure of myself.

A. M.— You are never sure of your beliefs, you mean. That is quite different. And it's so much better not to be too sure of things. Everyone here is so sure of everything that it gets to be rather a bore. Mrs. Teague is quite sure she knows everything there is to know about running a boarding house and I'm quite sure she doesn't. Mr. Pratt is sure he knows all there is to know about white goods and I am quite sure he doesn't deal in half the white goods made. Mrs. Clement Hale is sure she is a perfect lady, and I am sure she isn't. And Mr. Clement Hale is absolutely sure that everyone is a fool, and I'm not so sure of that either. So that's the way it goes.

Car.—So you think there is hope for me?

A. M.—Yes, if you don't let them influence you. Mrs. Clement Hale has rather a dominating personality, especially when her husband isn't around to offset her. She crushes but if you feel her malevolent influence stealing over you—

Car.—(*walking up stage*) Ah, you make me shudder! Perhaps I had better have my meals in my room.

A. M.—No, that isn't necessary. The only thing is, she might take to coming here. She's likely to.

Car.—Good heavens! But I shall have it understood I am to receive no callers. I have come here to write.

A. M.—Ah, you have to have things more than understood at Mrs. Teague's—that is if you want to be obeyed.

Car.—I don't believe they will bother me.

A. M.—I have my doubts. (*Laughing.*) Here I am, bothering you myself.

Car.—No—no you aren't, really. Don't go.

A. M.—(*surprised*) You want me to stay? i

Car.—I do. (*He comes down stage to chair.*)

A. M.—(*sitting on davenport*) It's the first time

anyone ever invited me to stay longer. You're not asking me just to be polite?

Car.—Never.

A. M.—Oh, I'm so glad. I hoped we could be friends, but then, after that first bad impression, I was afraid you would never consider me. I had planned quite another meeting (*with regret*) I had even learned my lines.

Car.—That's too bad. It's a wicked shame to spoil a perfectly good scene, but then you must admit it was your own fault.

A. M.—Yes. You see I was spying to get an idea what sort of a man you were before I thought out your lines. Am I forgiven?

Car.—You are. I forgave you way back in your tenth speech after your discovery.

A. M.—Thank you. I don't know what the speech was, but I feel it must have got over.

Car.—It did. Wasn't the response evident?

A. M.—Evident, but just a little late. (*They laugh.*)
(*Mrs. T.'s voice without.*)

Mrs. T.—A-nne Marie-e-e-e-e!

A. M.—(*going to c. d.*) I'm sorry, but I must go. (*Opens door.*) Yes, Mrs. Teague, I'm coming. (*To Mr. Car.*) If they bother you—the others—I will fix them.

Car.—A thousand thanks. (*A. M. goes off c. d.*)

(*Car. comes down stage to his desk, takes his papers preparatory to work, humming all the while. There is a knock at the door.*)

Car.—Come in.

(*Enter Miss Wimble, bearing gifts—a genteel plate of pink peppermints.*)

Miss W.—(*stopping short on threshold*) Oh, I've interrupted an inspiration.

Car.—(*coming toward her*) No, not at all.

Miss W.—(*coyly*) Really?

Car.—Truly.

Miss W.—(offering the peppermints) Just a slight token of my friendship and good will.

Car.—(taking the peppermints and placing them on desk) .Thank you. Will you sit down. (He pushes forward a chair and she sits on the edge of it.)

Miss W.—My room is next to yours. I do think it is nice to be neighborly. People that aren't neighborly are such bears.

Car.—(not meaning it) Aren't they?

Miss W.—I hope you like peppermints.

Car.—(with enthusiasm) I do—in—mensely.

Miss W.—I keep them in my room all the time. I like to have a nibble now and then.

Car.—Yes, and I imagine the mice do, too.

Miss W.—Oh, mercy, there isn't a mouse in the house.

Car.—That's nice. Then I sha'n't have to be in a hurry about eating mine up. (He sits at his desk chair.)

Miss W.—(with a melodramatic sigh) So this is where you write! How wonderfully romantic! To think that I, Lura Wimple, should have the opportunity of knowing such a man. Mr. Carrington, to me you are romance! Romance, the thing I have hungered for all my life.

Car.—(beginning to be alarmed) My dear lady, I romance?

Miss W.—If you only knew how I have desired it—yes, yes, how I have suffered from the very drabness of my life.

Car.—(with deepest sympathy) My dear lady!

Miss W.—I loathe the ordinary, the commonplace.

Car.—Indeed.

Miss W.—(rising, overcome with embarrassment) But what am I saying? I believe I am talking to you as I never talked to another in all my life. (clasping her hands) You—you are a kindred spirit.

(Knock at c. d.)

Miss W.—Who is that? (*She is flustered and flutters about like a caged bird.*)

Car.—(*going to door*) Probably another kindred spirit. The place is full of them.

Miss W.—(*runs after him and catches his coat sleeve*) You will never tell a thing I have confessed?

Car.—(*dramatically*) Trust me.

(*She comes back to her chair and sits as he opens c. d.*)

(Enter Mr. Pratt. On seeing Miss W. he stops short on the threshold.)

Miss W.—(*rising nervously*) Oh! (*They stare at each other a moment and Car. looks from one to the other in amazement.*)

Car.—(*feeling the frigidity of the atmosphere*): Not kindred spirits I see.

Mr. P.—I—I—I—

Miss W.—I will go.

(*She sweeps past them, her head up and goes off c. d.*)

Mr. P.—(*very humbly*) I hope, sir, you will pardon her strange departure, for I'm sure you think it strange, but last night Miss Wimple rejected me as a husband and this is the first time since that she has seen me. It is for that very reason that I have stayed from my work to come to you—to ask you, sir, what I can do about it.

Car.—(*leading Mr. P. down stage*) Ah, don't feel so badly about it old man. I shouldn't.

Mr. P.—But you—you are not in love with her.

Car.—Ah, no; and I can't imagine anyone else being. (*Walks up stage.*)

Mr. P.—Of course not; but I am—desperately in love with her.

Car.—Is it possible?

Mr. P.—If I knew—if I only knew what I could do to win her. I suppose you think it strange that I should come to you, but I felt the first glimpse I had of you, that you would understand—that you were a kindred spirit.

Car.—(*groans*) My good man, I have known Miss Wimple for about one half hour and the thing she most worshipped, as far as I can make out, is romance.

Mr. P.—(*flopping in a chair*) Romance!

Car.—(*with great importance*) In fact she confessed to me—in strict confidence, remember—that to her *I* was romance.

Mr. P.—(*bitterly*) Romance!

Car.—Now, why I am romance to her is more than I can tell—unless it is the fact that I came out of the nowhere on a pair of snowshoes.

Mr. P.—(*more bitterly*) You write plays!

Car.—(*with a groan*) Ah, yes, I write plays and believe me, I am beginning to regret it.

Mr. P.—(*mournfully*) I am a clerk.

Car.—(*with finality*) You are a clerk.

Mr. P.—But I am happy at my work. Ah, that is the sad part of it. I like my work. I shall never aspire to greater things. If she cannot take me as I am, I can never hope—never!

(*A knock on c. d.*)

Car.—Come in. (*Enter A. M.*)

A. M.—(*with a twinkle*) You are wanted at the telephone, Mr. Carrington. The telephone's in the lower back hall.

Car.—Thanks. (*Exit c. d.*)

A. M.—(*closing the door and coming to Mr. P.*) You mustn't bother him with your troubles. He's a terribly busy man.

Mr. P.—I had to. I was driven to despair. She has refused me.

A. M.—I knew she would. You are too drab.

Mr. P.—You think there is no hope?

A. M.—I won't say that, but you must change your ways. You must have a dash of the cavalier about you. You can do it. Already you have the likeness to one.

Mr. P.—(astounded) I—I have the likeness to a cavalier?

A. M.—Clip your mustache. Wear your hair pompadour style and much shorter, and when you get a new suit, have it tailor made.

(He regards her with great respect.)

A. M.—Forsake that heavy watch chain. They aren't worn now, and get a thin one.

Mr. P.—Yes—yes—I—I will do all you say.

A. M.—Then you must have a hobby.

Mr. P.—A hobby?

A. M.—Some interest besides your business, and you must never talk shop.

Mr. P.—She likes playwrights.

A. M.—I have it. Play-writing shall be your hobby.

Mr. P.—But the plays—

A. M.—I will write the plays.

Mr. P.—Oh, you are too kind!

A. M.—I am doing this because I think Miss Wimple is fond of you, in spite of what she says; and then (with a short laugh) I feel responsible in a way for what she has done.

Mr. P.—You?

A. M.—Mr. Pratt, I used to laugh at you because —because you sold white goods and I want to do everything in my power to make up for it. Miss Wimple thinks she must have romance. We will give her some.

Mr. P.—But you are sure all this advice you have given will make me a romantic figure in her eyes?

A. M.—This and what I will invent of your past.

Mr. P.—(alarmed) My past?

A. M.—Um-um, your past will have great weight with her.

Mr. P.—But I have no past.

A. M.—Ah, I know. That is why I must invent one.

Mr. P.—She—she will understand? (*anxiously*)

A. M.—Trust me. I know Miss Wimple. And I know what appeals to her. (*Takes his arm.*) Now, go, and I will talk with her here. (*She leads him to c. d.*)

Mr. P.—A thousand thanks and permit me to say—(*whispering*) I'll bet on your play every time to *his*. You've twice the imagination!

(*A. M. laughs and pushes him out gently, closes the door and goes over to the left wall and pounds on it vigorously.*)

A. M.—Miss Wimple! Miss Wimple!

(*A moment later the c. d. opens cautiously and Miss Wimple steps into the room.*)

Miss W.—(on seeing *A. M.*) You!

A. M.—(*going to her*) Of course. You didn't think it was he, did you?

Miss W.—I am prepared to think anything. I hang—as it were—in midair, always!

A. M.—What do you think of him?

Miss W.—The prince?

A. M.—The prince.

Miss W.—What do you?

A. M.—I'm asking you.

Miss W.—Well, to be perfectly truthful, I'm a bit disappointed.

A. M.—It isn't to be wondered at.

Miss W.—(*with relief*) Ah! He's—he's ordinary, isn't he?

A. M.—Terribly.

Miss W.—You think as I do.

A. M.—Not exactly—to be perfectly truthful. You know I'm not so romantic as you are. I didn't expect so much.

Miss W.—(*shocked*) He looks like a business man.

A. M.—He does. It's a fact, and that very fact would kill you.

Miss W.—(*sitting on davenport*) Ah, yes—it's cruel to be disappointed.

A. M.—It is. (*She comes over and leans on the back of the davenport.*) (*Philosophically.*) But oftentimes a disappointment is succeeded by good news. In fact, it's so with this case.

Miss W.—(*turning*) What do you mean?

A. M.—As far as you are concerned, we have a prince already in this house.

Miss W.—No!

A. M.—(*nodding*) Mr. Pratt.

Miss W.—(*fluttering*) Oh!

A. M.—I've made wonderful discoveries about him (*leaning forward*) interesting--intensely interesting discoveries. HIS PAST!

Miss W.—W-what!!

A. M.—Frightfully romantic and full of color. He is the son of an English artist and a wealthy French beauty.

Miss W.—(*sinking back*) Oh!

A. M.—(*visualizing*) Half of his life has been spent in the studios of Greenwich Village and half of it in the gorgeous salons of the French aristocracy. He became so sick of it all that he renounced riches on the one hand and art on the other and became out of sheer ennui—a drygoods clerk!

Miss W.—Poor, dear man! Think of that!

A. M.—(*tense*) But he has the artistic temperament. He cannot fight it. It gives vent in PLAYS!

Miss W.—(gasping) Plays!

*A. M.—*Long after you and I and all the household are in bed, he writes! I have read them.

Miss W.—(rising) Oh-oh, how little one can tell! Here I have been seeking romance all my life and it is at my door. But then, I always said—yes, I always said, you cannot deny it, that I always said he looked a part! (*She paces back and forth.*) Oh, you have upset me terribly—terribly! I will go to my room and meditate.

A. M.—(catching her arm) Yes, that is the wisest thing, Miss Wimple. (*She leads her to the door center, and Miss W. goes off.* *A. M. comes down to the desk, and gazes at the typewriter with awe, made up mostly of admiration..*)

(Enter Car. c. d.)

Car.—Hulloa! How do you like it?

*A. M.—*It's wonderful.

*Car.—*Some day I shall have you for my secretary. (*Looks about.*) Is he gone?

*A. M.—*Yes, and I don't think he'll bother you with his troubles again.

*Car.—*Thanks to you.

*A. M.—*Now I'm going. (*She goes toward door.*)

*Car.—*You needn't go.

*A. M.—*Aren't you going to work?

*Car.—*Um-um, some time Would you like to take a hike with me? I've an extra pair of snowshoes.

*A. M.—*Oh, I'd love to.

*Car.—*Very well, and you can tell me all about yourself. I've an idea you have a lot to tell.

*A. M.—*Not much about myself. Nothing much has ever happened to me, but I'll tell you of my aspirations.

(*Mrs. T.'s voice without.*)

*Mrs. T.—*Anne Ma-r-r-r-i-e-e-e!

*A. M.—*Mrs. Teagve!

Car.—Hide. Quick! .(He pushes the big chair up close to the whatnot and A. M. crouches behind it.)

(Knock on c. d.)

Car.—(casually lighting his pipe) Come in.

(Enter Mrs. T.)

Mrs. T.—I'm sorry to bother you. I thought maybe Anne Marie was here.

Car.—Anne Marie? No.

Mrs. T.—(confidentially) You see, I can't trust her very well. She lies. And sometimes, when I call her she doesn't answer, and I know she hears me.

Car.—That's a pity.

Mrs. T.—It is, when I've been so good to her. But the young folks now-a-days do just as they please. I suppose she's got some book and deep into it and doesn't know I exist. Or else she's play-acting. One day I hunted high and low for her and good lord, if she wasn't in the garret thinking she was Mary Queen of Scots. She's a strange child as ever lived and about the worst one I could have picked for my place. Oh, well—(turns to go) Still, I will say this. There's no doubt to my mind she'd make an elegant freak character in a play. (With a bob she is gone, closing the door after her.)

A. M.—(emerging with a laugh) Now, you know what she thinks of me and all in one speech, too. There aren't many playwrights could do better.

(*Car.* goes to desk and pulls out two pairs of snowshoes.)

Car.—How will you get out?

A. M.—Oh, easily. She's gone to her room in the back, and we can go out the front door.

Car.—Can you get your things?

A. M.—Yes, they're in the lower hall.

(A knock at c. d.)

... *A. M.*—Give me the snowshoes. It's callers. (She snatches them from him.)

Car.—But you mustn't go out now, with them.

A. M.—I'm not. I'll hide behind the chair and steal out if they stay, then come back and call you.

(*He regards her with admiration. There is another knock on c. d.*)

A. M.—Quick! Answer! But don't let them take this chair. (*She crouches behind it, snowshoes and all. He places typewriter in it and goes to the door.*)

(*Enter Clement Hale and Mrs. Clement Hale.*)

Mrs. H.—(*in a most affected manner.*) How do you do? I am Mrs. Clement Hale, and this (*indicating*) is my husband.

Car.—How do you do? How do you do, sir?

Mrs. H.—(*coming down stage*) Just a tiny visit to let you know we are neighborly people.

Car.—Mighty nice of you to come. (*Pulls forward two straight-back chairs.*) Won't you be seated?

Mr. H.—Quite a room you have here, if it is on the top floor. I like it.

Car.—I prefer the top floor.

Mrs. H.—(*sitting*) Of course he does. He's got to have peace and quiet.

Mr. H.—(*sitting*) Um, has he? I didn't know you realized that.

(*Car. pulls up a chair and sits beside them.*)

Mr. H.—(*pointing to each one*) Three little crows sat on a tree.

Mrs. H.—Clement! (*To Car.*) My husband is awfully facetious.

Mr. H.—Painfully so.

Mrs. H.—Now tell us are you writing a play?

Mr. H.—Writing a play? Of course he is. I told you he was, before we came. And we, by our insipid little visit, are keeping the world from a masterpiece.

Mrs. H.—Oh, that would be selfish.

Mr. H.--Yet, she makes no motion to go. Strange.

Mrs. H.--Do tell us a little about it.

Car.--About it?

Mrs. H.--About your play-writing. I've always longed to know somebody famous.

Mr. H.--That is what I have had to put up with, Mr. Carrington, ever since I married her. She has always longed to know somebody famous.

Car.--Rather tough on you, sir.

Mr. H.--I used to tell her Anne Marie would be famous some day, but she wasn't satisfied with that. Now you've come, she'll pester your life out.

Mrs. H.--Famous people must expect to be bothered. I read of one once who used to have swarms of hero worshippers come to catch the grasshoppers on his lawn.

Mr. H.--Kind of hard on the old fellow's gardens. Wonder how he got rid of the bugs.

(*Anne Marie works her way out, cautiously and unseen.*)

Mrs. H.--He afterward fell in love with my niece.

Mr. H. (*In despair*) Your niece.

Mrs. H.--There, Mr. Carrington, I do want you to meet my niece. You'd be charmed with her--every man is.

Car.--I'm afraid my work would suffer sadly.

Mrs. H.--Work? You'd never think of work if Bellinda came. (*Touches him on the arm.*) She may come, any day. In fact, I'm expecting her. Of course, I don't see her very often. She's so very popular, but sometimes, when she gets tired of society she comes to her aunt, who hasn't any money, consequently no society duties.

Car.--Is she pretty? (*Hale chuckles.*)

Mrs. H.--Pretty? My dear man, she's wonderful. Seventeen artists have asked to paint her portrait. Won-

derful coloring, you know—real Titian hues in her hair. (*Hale chuckles again.*) And she would just adore you, wouldn't she, Clement?

Mr. H.—She might for a time. But Belinda's adoration is of short duration.

Mrs. H.—She has known all types of men—professional and business, but I don't think she ever met a playwright before. Do you recall that she has, Clement dear?

Mr. H.—I imagine she has if there was ever one within a radius of one hundred miles.

Mrs. H.—Well, I'm sure she hasn't. I remember she had a tremendous flirtation with an actor once—a big actor, too. Then this writer I was speaking of a while ago. He was a kind of poet, I believe.

Mr. H.—Very different, my dear, a poet and a playwright.

Mrs. H.—Really, she has been quite a heart-breaker.

Mr. H.—Has Belinda! Tell Mr. Carrington her age Lucy, or he will think she is as old as Circe.

Mrs. H.—Well, I won't tell her age exactly, but I will say she had her first affair at twelve years.

(*Car. looks toward chair for A. M.*)

Car.—Heavens!

Mr. H.—Mrs. Hale makes Belinda out quite terrible, does she not? But really, Belinda's not terrible, at all.

Car.—Of course she isn't. I'm sure if she's your niece, she can't be anything but nice. (*Car. looks toward chair, nervously.*)

Mrs. H.—There! Every man says things like that to me, except my husband.

Mr. H.—They don't know you, my dear.

Mrs. H.—But to go back to my niece—(*again Car. looks toward chair.*)

Mr. H.—(*who has noticed him*) My dear Lucy, don't. Can't you see you've worked the poor fellow into a nervous fever already.

Mrs. H.—But that's what I want to do, because I know no expectation could exceed Belinda!

(Knock at c. d.)

Car.—Come in.

(Enter A. M. *Car.* looks relieved.)

A. M.—(to *Car.*) You are wanted at the telephone, Mr. Carrington.

Car.—(rising) Pardon me.

A. M.—You'd better put on your cap and coat. The scrub woman has all the windows in the lower hall wide open.

Car.—(getting his hat and coat from bedroom) Do I need my gloves?

A. M.—Yes, if you don't have them your hands are likely to freeze to the receiver.

(*A. M. goes out c. d. Car. comes from the bedroom, coat and cap and gloves in his arms.*)

Car.—You'll excuse my leaving you. I've been expecting this call. Make yourself at home. (Exit c. d.)

Mr. H.—Certainly. Certainly. Be careful your lips don't freeze to the transmitter.

Mrs. H.—(with the greatest reverence) Oh, Clement, think of it! Here we are, sitting in a real author's room. (Turning.) That is his typewriter.

Mr. H.—So I have been aware all the time, and occupying the only comfortable chair in the room.

(*Mrs. H. rises and goes over to the desk.*)

Mrs. H.—And oh, Clement, here is his pen and blank paper. I wonder if I could take just one sheet of paper as—as a souvenir?

Mr. H.—I wouldn't. He might have them counted.

Mrs. H.—Nonsense! (She takes a sheet, folds it and stuffs it in her girdle.)

Mr. H.—Lucy!

Mrs. H.—(coming down stage) My dear, his last play ran forty weeks on Broadway.

Mr. H.—Poor thing. It must have been pretty well played out.

Mrs. H.—Clement, wouldn't it be glorious if Belinda caught him?

Mr. H.—He's not the one for Belinda.

Mrs. H.—I don't see why.

Mr. H.—You wouldn't.

Mrs. H.—She's beautiful and attractive.

Mr. H.—She hasn't an original idea in her head.

(*Voces without.*)

Mrs. H.—Hush! He's coming. (*Sits demurely.*)

Mrs. T.—(*without*) Mrs. Hale! Mrs. Hale!

Mrs. H.—(*rising and going toward door*) Yes, Mrs. Teague, I'm in here. (*The center door opens and Mrs. T. appears on the threshold.*)

Mrs. T.—I've fetched you a surprise box this time. (*She stands aside and Belinda enters and runs into her aunt's arms.*)

Belinda—Aunt Lucy!

(*Hale rises.*)

Mrs. H.—(*kissing her*) My dear Belinda!

Belinda—(*going to her uncle*) And Uncle Clement! (*She kisses him gingerly.*)

Mr. H.—Come, come! Give your old uncle a decent kiss.

Belinda—But you're so prickly. (*She kisses him again, gingerly.*)

Mrs. H.—Of course you are, Clement, and she has such a delicate skin.

Mrs. T.—I'll go up to fix Anne Marie's room for her. You can come along when you like.

Mrs. H.—Very well, Mrs. Teague. (*Mrs. T. goes off c. d.*)

Belinda—(*glancing about.*) Whose room is this? (*Hale walks to the window.*)

Mrs. H.—It's his! The playwright I sent you the special delivery about.

Belinda—Oh, really? (*Looks about with interest.*)

Mrs. H.—We were making a little call just to show our neighborliness.

Mr. H.—(*with a chuckle*) By the way, isn't that telephone message rather lengthy?

Belinda—Telephone message?

Mrs. H.—Yes, he was called to the phone a minute or two ago.

Belinda—Is he coming back here?

Mr. H.—I think not, directly. I see him crossing the snow toward Pelham.

Mrs. H.—(*running to window*) What! But he said he would return. He said for us to wait. (*Belinda follows her aunt to window.*)

(*Hale chuckles.*)

Mr. H.—So we can, if we're patient.

Belinda—Who's the girl with him?

Mr. H.—It looks to me strangely like Anne Marie Perkins.

Belinda—(*contemptuously*) Anne Marie Perkins?

Mrs. H.—A girl Mrs. Teague has taken to help her out in the kitchen.

Belinda—(*coming down stage*) So that's the company he keeps.

Mrs. H.—He won't now, dear—that you have come.

Belinda—Is this Anne Perkins pretty?

Mrs. H.—(*emphatically*) No!

Mr. H.—(*emphatically*) Yes!

Mrs. H.—She isn't, Clement. (*To Belinda.*) My dear, she's plain.

Belinda—Any style?

Mrs. H.—None.

Hale—Plenty. (*emphatically.*)

Mrs. H.—(getting excited) Belinda, she's positively skinny.

Mr. H.—(fairly roaring) But, isn't that style?

(*Belinda laughs.*)

Mrs. H.—My dear, she's no competitor for you at all. He's lonely and there's no one else.

Belinda—Well, he won't be lonely any more for I've come. (*Takes her aunt's arm.*) Let's go to my room. I want to get my wraps off.

(*They go off arm in arm, Clement Hale following, as the curtain falls.*)

CURTAIN

ACT III.

Time—One week later. Morning.

Scene—Same as Act I. Mrs. Teague's dining room.

Discovered—Belinda in chair at the left end of the dining table facing the audience. Carrington is seated beside her. They are drinking milk and eating cookies, having just returned from a morning walk. Before curtain rises, they can be heard singing the following ditty in a monotone. After the rise of the curtain, they sing it again.

Two little mousies
Running through a field.
One got plowed through
And, oh, how he squealed!

One little mousie
Left all alone,
Gave up running
And turned to a stone.

Belinda—(foolishly) Two little mousies—

Car.—(interrupting) Please, Belinda!

Belinda—Please, what?

Car.—Be sensible. You promised—

Belinda—I will now. I just wanted to prove to myself I could make a fool of you.

Car.—Are you satisfied?

Belinda—Quite. You have exceeded my maddest expectations.

Car.—(taking the pitcher) Have another glass?

Belinda—(shocked) I never drink more than one glass. The second makes one fat. (*Closes her eyes.*) And if I should get fat, I'd die!

Car.—But, Belinda, permit me to say you would be very charming—plump.

Belinda—Never, John!

Car.—(admiringly) Think of the dimples you would have.

Belinda—And the chins! No, I'd rather be slender than have a thousand dimples. (*Nibbles a cracker daintily.*) Besides, I'm fairly plump now. If I get any plumper I shall go to Arna.

Car.—Arna?

Belinda—You're not familiar with the beauty doctors.

Car.—Belinda, I'm shocked.

Belinda—That's because you don't know me. Mercy! I have a score of appointments a week with beauty specialists. On Monday I go to Chalmers for massage. On Tuesday to Lizette for scalp treatment. On Wednesday to Lizette for manicure. On Thursday to—

Car.—(horrified) Don't. You distress me.

Belinda—(lightly) Really? Why, I had a lot more to tell. I was going to tell you about having my face peeled. A very trying operation.

Car.—Having your face peeled?

Belinda—Um-um. To take away the wrinkles. It's a very painful operation.

Car.—(*with deepest sympathy*) It must be.

Belinda—Then, having one's eyebrows plucked! That's painful, too.

Car.—Heavens, how you must suffer!

Belinda—(*seriously*) I do—frightfully. No one has any sympathy for me, though.

Car.—But why do you have those dreadful things done? You—you are quite beautiful as it is.

Belinda—That's sweet of you to say so, but I don't agree. Then, too, what would I do mornings if I didn't have treaments. Why, they're the only things I have to think of. I'm terribly interested now in a method whereby eyelashes are stuck into the lids and made to take root.

Car.—Horrors! Whose eyelashes?

Belinda—(*laughing*) Anyone's that isn't vain. A Frenchman is trying out the method and with good success.

Car.—But you wouldn't have *that* done!

Belinda—Oh, yes I would.

Car.—You have wonderful lashes, and they curl.

Belinda—Not half so wonderful as I might have.

Car.—Oh, you mustn't, you know—really.

Car.—Please, Belinda, promise me you won't do these dreadful things.

Belinda—Of course I will, silly.

Car.—But I—I am serious.

Belinda—Well, you mustn't be with me. I never allow a man to be serious with me.

Car.—On principle? (*He spills some milk on trouser leg.*)

Belinda—On principle. (*She sops up the milk with her handkerchief.*) There, you have spilled your milk, you naughty boy. And I sha'n't allow you another suit

this season. Don't you know milk is greasy and you must be especially careful.

Car.—(*catching her hand*) Belinda!

Belinda—(*in the same tone she would use with a baby*) A-ah!

Car.—(*drawing away his hand*) You are very severe.

Belinda—I have to be. (*Looking at him earnestly*) Are you angry? (*Pause.*) Are you?

Car.—(*smiling*) No, I'm well aware I ought to be, but I'm not.

Belinda—(*sweetly*) No one ever gets angry with me, not even papa, when I overdraw three times in succession at the bank. (*Giving a final rub.*) There. That will do until you can get to the tailor. Really I ought to have used hot water. One should use hot water for greasy things, you know.

Car.—You are very clever. (*Looking at his knee.*) It has gone completely.

Belinda—Yes, I can always get rid of things I don't want to see.

Car.—Ah, Belinda, I don't doubt it, and not only things, either.

Belinda—Now, I suppose you think I want to get rid of you.

Car.—(*with some alarm*) Do you?

Belinda—Not yet. Why, I've only known you a week. Of course, I've been with you nearly every minute of that time, but even I don't tire of a man as quickly as that.

Car.—I don't like to hear you talk that way.

Belinda—Oh, yes you do. You must, because that's my way of talking, and, well—you seem to like it.

Car.—I wish, Belinda, you'd take me seriously.

Belinda—Oh, you poor dear, I can't; not even if you are the famous playwright, John Arthur Carrington.

Car.—Belinda, will you marry me?

Belinda—The fourth time, and when I've told you I could never marry an artist. You're too temperamental, and I shouldn't appreciate you. I want a man, a plain, rather stupid sort of man, who hasn't an original idea in his head, and who will think of nobody but me.

Car.—But surely I can do that.

Belinda—You think so, now, but there would come a time when—oh, you know the old story, Pierrot loves his music—

Car.—I swear—

Belinda—Then you aren't stupid enough.

Car.—I'm sorry.

Belinda—And I should hate you when you were writing a play—and you would always be writing plays.

Car.—(rashly) I'll give up playwriting. (*She laughs.*) I'll do anything, if you'll marry me.

Belinda—Will you go wherever I ask you, to—pink teas? Receptions? Musical soirees? And be my ownest, sweetest little puppy dog, obedient and docile?

Car.—Yes.

Belinda—And you'll never mention playwriting?

Car.—Never.

Belinda—And you'll sell your typewriter and all the paraphernalia of a writer?

Car.—Yes. (*He sighs unconsciously.*)

Belinda—(*rising*) Very well—I'll consider your offer.

(*He attempts to take her hand, but she draws it away.*)

Belinda—You may come to me within half an hour, and I will tell you—yes or no. (*She gathers up her wraps. He rises and assists her mechanically. Suddenly Belinda laughs heartily.*)

Car.—(alarmed) What is it? Don't!

Belinda—I am laughing because you are the first man that ever made me take a thing seriously and I don't like it. (*Exit d. l.*)

(*He stands a second gazing after her, then gathers up his wraps wearily and starts for d. l., just as A. M. enters c. d. She wears a gingham apron.*)

A. M.—(*feigning indifference*) Good morning, Mr. Carrington.

Car.—(*scarcely aware of her presence*) Good morning. (*Exit d. l.*)

(*A. M. buries her head on the table and weeps.*)

A. M.—Oh, I can't bear it! I can't bear it!

(*Enter Mrs. T. c. d.*)

Mrs. T.—For heaven's sake, Anne Marie, what is it?

(*A. M. jumps up, wipes her eyes hastily, takes her cloth and polish from her pocket and goes for the silver in the sideboard drawer.*)

Mrs. T.—Anne Marie Perkins, I know what you're crying about, and you needn't try to conceal the fact that you're crying. I told you from the first your imagination would be your ruin. You have let it run away with you just as I said you would, when you ought to have known he didn't mean business.

A. M.—(*half sobbing but making a mighty effort*) I think he did, but I can't compete with Belinda.

Mrs. T.—Of course, you can't, and why aren't you sensible about it?

A. M.—(*coolly*) I mean I think I can.

Mrs. T.—Anne Marie Perkins, you're stark, staring mad. Belinda's beautiful.

A. M.—But I'm clever.

Mrs. T.—Well, of all things.

A. M.—I'm loads cleverer than Belinda.

Mrs. T.—A man doesn't care anything about a *clever* wife.

A. M.—Oh, yes, he does, if she's stylish, too.

Mrs. T.—Well, for heaven's sake, Anne Marie, how can you expect to be stylish?

A. M.—Because I know what style is. (*She pulls off her gingham apron.*) Look!

Mrs. T.—Good lord!

A. M.—(*twirling about*) It's mine!

Mrs. T.—Yours?

A. M.—I bought it with the money I had saved for my shorthand course.

Mrs. T.—Anne Marie Perkins, you *have* gone mad.

A. M.—(*calmly*) Perhaps I have risked a good deal. It cost one hundred dollars.

Mrs. T.—(*aghast*) You bought it to get *him*?

A. M.—Yes.

Mrs. T.—And you are too late.

A. M.—Too late? What do you mean? (*She goes to Mrs. T.*)

Mrs. T.—He asked Belinda to marry him a few minutes ago.

A. M.—Oh!

Mrs. T.—(*taking her by the shoulder*) Come, now. Put on your apron and go at the silver. I suppose you've got to consider this dress one of the mistakes of your life.

(*A. M. sits, takes up her cloth and starts to polish. Mrs. T. watches her a moment, nods in satisfaction and goes off d. c. A. M. puts down her cloth immediately and rests her chin on her hands, and stares straight ahead.*)

(*Enter Mr. H. d. l.*)

Mr. H.—Well, well, well! Day-dreaming?

A. M.—No, just regretting.

Mr. H.—(coming over to her) You haven't come to regret things at your tender age. What is it?

A. M.—Nothing—that is, I can't tell.

Mr. H.—Has he been rotten to you?

A. M.—No, not exactly.

Mr. H.—Is it Belinda? Um?

A. M.—He—he has asked her to marry him.

Mr. H.—Let me tell you something. He's not in love with Belinda.

A. M.—(rising and walking down stage) Oh, yes, he is—fearfully—awfully in love with her. (*H. watches her with admiration.*)

Mr. H.—Whe-ew! Some gown, my lady.

A. M.—(disinterestedly) Do you like it?

Mr. H.—Jove! It's a creation. It's art! I always said you had the figure. (*Goes to her.*) Has he seen it?

A. M.—(smiling) No.

Mr. H.—Let him.

A. M.—What's the use—now?

Mr. H.—Because if he saw you in that, my dear, he'd chuck a thousand Belinda's. It's distinctive.

A. M.—I have invested my last cent in it.

Mr. H.—It's worth it. By Jove, you'll win. I'll bet you win. I'll bet a thousand you win. He knows a good looking woman when he sees one, if that's what he's after.

A. M.—(sadly) I'm afraid he is.

Mr. H.—(with enthusiasm) Go to him with that dress on before Belinda makes up her mind.

A. M.—Hasn't she made up her mind?

Mr. H.—No, you have twenty minutes.

A. M.—Oh, but—

Mr. H.—Yes, yes. I want you to have him. You are the one for him. I like you, and I like him. I want to see you married.

(Enter Miss Wimple, d. l.)

Miss W.—(starting back) Oh, I hope I'm not intruding. I—I want to speak to Anne Marie.

Mr. H.—Certainly—certainly, speak away, but don't speak longer than twenty minutes. (Exit d. l.)

Miss W.—(noting gown) My dear, my dear, you look like a picture in Vogue!

A. M.—Yes, yes, I know it, but what is it?

Miss W.—(coming down stage) I am going to marry Mr. Pratt.

A. M.—He has asked you again?

Miss W.—Yes. He is to meet me here in five minutes and I—I am to give him my answer.

A. M.—He is a very fine man, Miss Wimple.

Miss W.—And so romantic. The other night he showed me a play he had written. It was wonderful. Full of moonlights and fountains and balconies with trailing vines.

A. M.—It was a good play.

Miss W.—Wasn't it? And I do like him with a clipped mustache. It's rather cavalierish and all that. Then his clothes! Clothes do make an awful difference.

A. M.—(thoughtfully) You think so? I'm just wondering how much difference they do make. (A door slams.)

Miss W.—He's coming! (Fluffs her hair.) I heard the front door close.

A. M.—I'll go. (She starts toward c. d. just as Mrs. T. swings it open and pokes her head in.)

Mrs. T.—Miss Wimple, come here just for a minute, won't you? (Disappears.) (A. M. puts on her gingham apron.)

Miss W.—(to A. M.) Oh, dear! Wait and explain to him. I'll be right back. (She goes off c. d. as Mr. P. enters d. l.)

Mr. P.—Has she come?

A. M.—She has been here, but Mrs. Teague called her for a minute. She will be right back.

Mr. P.—It's all right. It gives me a chance to tell you how grateful I am to you. She—she seems to look upon me favorably since I took your advice.

A. M.—I'm glad, Mr. Pratt.

Mr. P.—She read your play.

A. M.—I'm awfully glad I could do anything for you.

Mr. P.—And then your advice about my clothes.

A. M.—It helped?

Mr. P.—Oh, marvelously. I paid more for this suit than I have for my last three, but I'm not grumbling. It's been worth it to me. It's made her take notice. It's made me someone in her eyes.

A. M.—Do you really think that clothes make all that difference?

Mr. P.—(*fercently*) I do.

A. M.—Oh, it can't be true.

(Enter Miss W. c. d.)

Miss W.—(with eyes for no one but Mr. P.) Oh, you're here. I'm sorry if I've kept you waiting, but Mrs. Teague seems rather upset. You'd better go to her, Anne Marie.

A. M.—I think I won't. I'm tired of going to her.

(She walks off quietly d. l.)

Mr. P.—You—you are going to marry me? (He holds out his arms and she goes to him and rests her head shgyl on his shoulder.)

Miss W.—Yes—Clarence. (Pause.) Isn't this romantic?

Mr. P.—To me, you are romance.

Miss W.—I? Oh, no, dear—you. You make me feel as if this vulgar room were Venice, this crude floor a gondola and there was moonlight over all. (Breaks away from him gently.) I can hear the splash of waves

and feel the waft of warm air against my cheek. When I am with you it will always be Venice, my dear.

Mr. P.—(enthralled) You are wonderful.

Miss W.—(coming down stage) And to think, love, I once denied myself—this. Oh, I was blind. I was deaf. I was ignorant. I didn't know you.

Mr. P.—(following her) I forgive you a thousand times. It was my own fault, I know now.

(*Mrs. T.'s head appears at c. d.*)

Mrs. T.—Anne Ma-rie-e-e! (*Seeing them together*) Oh, I didn't know—

Mr. P.—(quickly) It's all right, Mrs. Teague.

Miss W.—(taking Mr. P.'s arm) Come, love. Our dream must not be interrupted harshly. Let us glide on.

(*She leads him off d. l. dreamily, Mrs. T. staring after them.*)

Mrs. T.—In the name of heaven, has everyone gone mad? She's mad, that's certain, and he's mad, too, mad as a March hare, of course he is, or he'd never marry her. They're both mad. Anne Marie-e-e!

(*Enter A. M. d. l.*)

A. M.—Yes.

Mrs. T.—You'd better set the table. It's quarter of twelve. I've just had a call to go over to my sister's. The dinner's about ready. I can depend on you?

A. M.—(with a sigh) Yes.

Mrs. T.—That's the girl. I see you've come to your senses. (Regarding the apron with approval.) That's right. Clothes never got anyone anything worth while. Teague proposed to me in a blue calico apron. There's nothing in it. (Earnestly.) Then I can depend on you?

A. M.—(dully) Yes. (*Mrs. T. goes off c. d.*)

(*A. M. pulls aside apron and looks at her dress, then pulls the apron tightly around her and goes for the tablecloth.*)

(Enter Mr. H. d. l.)

Mr. H.—Anne Marie.

A. M.—(turning) Yes, Mr. Hale.

Mr. H.—Belinda has refused him.

A. M.—She—she has refused him!

Mr. H.—Yes, and he's pretty much broken up—at least he thinks he is. He's getting ready for a cross-country tramp—doen't want to eat and all that rot. He'll go out by the front door. Catch him as he goes by and see that he eats something before he starts.

A. M.—No—no, I can't.

Mr. H.—You must. Come, come! I depend on you. Take off that ridiculous apron. (Goes to her and attempts to unbutton apron.)

A. M.—No! No!

Mr. H.—Anne Marie! You must obey me. Stand still and let me take off this hideous, misshapen piece of calico.

A. M.—But I don't want to win him with a dress.

Mr. H.—Rot! You won't be. (She stands still and he takes off the apron and holds it on his arm.) You'll just be trapping him. It will make him sit up and take notice. The winning comes later.

(A. M. shakes her head dubiously.)

A. M.—I'm—I'm afraid it's unprincipled.

Mr. H.—Bosh! (Regarding her.) Jove, you're stunning.

A. M.—(with a sigh) I wish I felt so.

Mr. H.—(listening) Hush! He's coming. Do your best for him. You can. (Exit d. l.)

(A. M. stands a moment, rigid. Steps are heard without.)

A. M.—Mr. Carrington. (She goes d. l.)

Car.—(from the hall) Yes?

A. M.—Will you come here, please?

(Enter Car. He regards her in amazement, but tries to conceal the fact.)

Car.—I—1—

A. M.—Yes?

Car.—I was about to say. (During the following conversation he watches her every motion and his admiration grows.)

A. M.—Yes? You were about to say?

Car.—That—that— (pause)

A. M.—(taking pity on him) That you wouldn't be here for dinner?

Car.—Yes—just that.

A. M.—(coming back to the chair) You are going for a tramp?

Car.—Yes.

A. M.—But surely you want something to eat first.

Car.—No, no. (Comes down stage.)

A. M.—Please. You'd be sorry if you had to kill a bear and then it might be a case of him killing you first.

Car.—It wouldn't matter much if he did.

A. M.—(winningly) Please have a few sandwiches and a piece of cake. If you starved I should feel responsible. I should regret it all my life.

Car.—It isn't your fault if I starve. It's—hers. She

A. M.—(quickly) I know, and I'm sorry if she has made you unhappy.

Car.—(regarding her earnestly) Thank you (grimly) She isn't.

A. M.—Perhaps she can't help it—not caring. Perhaps it's her way.

Car.—She told me she had a heart of sawdust and I believe it.

A. M.—I wish you wouldn't take things so hard It won't make her relent, and it takes a lot out of you.

Car.--I can't help it.

A. M.—(*coming down stage and standing behind him*) Yes, you can. Just remember there's many a man and woman, too, who has been through it and is happy today.

Car.--I offered to give up playwriting for her.

A. M.—(*with a smile*) Ah, then you are saved from a very great unhappiness, I am sure. How wretched you would have been after a while. (*Earnestly.*) Don't you see you must have a sympathetic wife?

Car.—(*crossing to left*) They are all alike—women.

A. M.—(*smiling*) You know better than that. You told me so, yourself, once.

Car.--I take back everything I ever said about them except my last remark.

A. M.—And—and you judge all women by Belinda? That's not fair.

Car.--I think so.

A. M.—I'm not like Belinda. I wouldn't have treated a man as she has treated you. (*Pause.*) You don't believe me, do you?

Car.--You are asking me to believe the impossible.

A. M.—It isn't the thing that is impossible. It's the circumstances preceding it that have made it seem impossible to you.

Car.--Perhaps.

A. M.—And you will think I'm jealous if I say I don't believe Belinda is the one for you.

Car.--Why don't you?

A. M.—Because she is so horribly out of sympathy with all that is dearest in life to you. You think now you could give up your work but you couldn't. You would try, and be continually unhappy, and that would be bad, horribly, cruelly bad.

Car.--But I would be satisfied to have just Belinda.

A. M.—(with an effort) No, you have too active a brain to be satisfied with just Belinda. She's—she's not your kind at all. (*During the following speech she walks back and forth frequently and he watches her as if in a dream.*) She is entertaining and says cute things and has a superficial knowledge but after a while you would die mentally and that's the worst kind of a death. (*She is very earnest in her talk and isn't for a minute conscious of her gown.*) Belinda's like a clever little trick dog. She knows so much and no more. She doesn't think for herself and she's not original. After you had become accustomed to her trained phrases you would find yourself bored. She's all on the surface and you're all for sounding the depths. You—you would be wretched in her companionship. Then, Belinda's no sport and you are. She likes to look beautiful and after a while you'd hate that. It would be so stupid. She likes pink teas and receptions where you scarcely ever hear wit of any kind, and where manners get to be a burden. Oh, I could go on for an hour, but you are angry with me, are you not? (*She stops before him.*)

Car.—Angry No, I was thinking how strangely becoming that gown is to you.

A. M.—(*flopping into the nearest chair*) Oh!

Car.—You'll forgive me. I'm—I'm not myself.

A. M.—(*looking at him earnestly*) Aren't you? Are you quite sure?

Car.—Quite. Why?

A. M.—Because I think you *are* yourself now. It was last week you were not yourself. You've been awfully silly.

Car.—Silly? I?

A. M.—Terribly. I felt bad for you at times.

Car.—(*coolly*) Indeed?

A. M.—You quite lost your head. You reminded me of a love-sick school boy. I wouldn't have believed it of you, Mr. Carrington. (*Rises and comes down stage.*)

Car.—I suppose you consider yourself above such things.

A. M.—Above a foolish infatuation—yes; and I'm only eighteen.

Car.—Infatuation?

A. M.—That's what it was. But I'm not above falling in love deeply and desperately. (*With a sigh.*)

Car.—Are you very sure it's love?

A. M.—Very—because at times it makes me suffer here (*her hand on her heart*) and it's unselfish, and then, oh, wonderful!

Car.—You have experienced a great deal.

A. M.—Yes, and all within a week.

Car.—Really?

A. M.—Really.

Car.—(*offering his hand*) Accept my sympathy.

A. M.—(*solemnly*) Thank you. (*Takes his hand.*)

Car.—It helps to know another suffers from the same malady.

A. M.—Yes, I feel better already since we shook hands.

Car.—Do you mind telling me about your affair? You needn't mention any names unless you wish.

A. M.—Not at all. But let's sit down. (*They sit opposite each other.*) Of course, it's rather a delicate thing for a girl to admit that a man threw her over for another—

Car.—(*wrathfully*) He did that?

A. M.—Um-um, and the worst part of it is he doesn't seem to realize how he's hurt me.

Car.—The brute!

A. M.—When I first saw him I knew he was the one man in the world for me. I felt it.

Car.—But of course, he wasn't.

A. M.—Oh, yes, he was, but he doesn't realize it.

Car.—The wretch! What are you going to do about it?

A. M.—I don't know. What would you do?

Car.—Well, of course, you might propose.

A. M.—But don't you think that's rather unmaidenly?

Car.—Not at all. I think it shows rather a fine spirit in a girl—provided, of course, she takes a refusal as a man does.

A. M.—As a man does! But isn't that taking it rather hard?

Car.—(*quickly*) I mean, if she doesn't put up the cry of wounded pride that chivalry has given her sex.

A. M.—(*rising*) I see.

Car.—(*following her*) Are you game?

A. M.—Game?

Car.—For a refusal?

A. M.—I—don't know.

Car.—Then you aren't the girl I thought you.

A. M.—I didn't know you ever gave me a thought.

Car.—I gave you a good many the first day I met you, and I've given you a good many more since I saw you in that very charming gown.

A. M.—(*distressed*) Oh, please don't say that.

Car.—(*crossing right*) I thought you liked frankness.

A. M.—I do, but I don't like to think you're so silly.

Car.—Silly? (*She goes to the sideboard and takes out a box.*)

A. M.—As to be tripped by a gown.

Car.—What is that for? (*Indicating box.*)

A. M.—I am going to pack some sandwiches for you. I don't want you to go hungry, or to have to kill bears.

Car.—I'm not going out.

A. M.—Not going out?

Car.—I'm going to stay home and eat my dinner and be sensible as you advise. (*She looks at him and smiles wistfully.*) If you can endure disappointment—and have the grit to get a dinner I can eat it.

A. M.—Has my sympathy meant all that to you?

Car.—Everything. (*Starts to d. l.*)

A. M.—Whenever you need any more, I will give it.

Car.—(*coming back to her*) I will need it often. Will you be patient?

A. M.—Very.

(*He starts off again.*)

A. M.—Mr. Carrington?

Car.—Yes?

A. M.—Does it matter what I wear on these occasions?

Car.—It really doesn't; but so long as you have that very charming gown, I think you might as well wear it. (*Exit d. l.*)

(*A. M. stands a moment looking at her dress.*)

A. M.—I wonder! I wonder!

(*Voices from the hall.*)

A. M.—(*running to the door*) Heavens! They are coming to dinner and I have not prepared it.

(*She runs off c. d.*)

(*Enter d. l. Mr. and Mrs. Clement Hale, Mr. Pratt, Miss Wimple.*)

Mrs. H.—(*to Mr. H.*) Did you notice how preoccupied he was? Poor fellow!

Mr. H.—(*spying the bare table*) Preoccupied? Someone else is preoccupied, too.

Mrs. H.—(looking at table with disgust) Oh, Anne Marie? Well, she always is.

(Mr. P. and Miss W. are engrossed in each other.)

*Mr. H.—*But not to this point, my dear. Mrs. Teague has left her alone before, but we have always had something on the table, no matter how humble.

Mr. P.—(coming to) No dinner? Well—*(He is really hungry.)*

Miss W.—(cooingly) Oh, Clarence, dear, surely you don't mind today of all days. I've some peppermints in my room.

Mr. H.—(in utter disgust) Peppermints!

*Mrs. H.—*Let's be seated, anyway. *(She sits in her customary place.)*

Mr. H.—(sitting) And go through the form. *(Miss W. and Mr. P. sit.)*

Mrs. H.—(in a louder voice than is necessary) The truth is, the whole household is upset because Belinda has refused Mr. Carrington.

(Enter A. M. c. d., much flushed. She carries a tray with bread and butter, teacups, etc.)

A. M.—(setting the tray on the table and beginning to arrange the cups.) Oh, I'm sorry! Mrs. Teague left me to get dinner and I've burned everything. I'm so sorry!

Mr. H.—(with a chuckle) I wouldn't be, my dear. If I had a gown like that and looked so well in it, I wouldn't be sorry for anything.

Mrs. H.—Clement!

A.M.—I'll be as quick as possible. *(Exit c. d.)*

(Mr. H. passes cups, plates and spoons.)

Mrs. H.—Where did she get it?

Mr. H.—I don't know, If I did, I'd send and get you one, my dear.

(Enter Carr. He goes quietly to his chair.)

Mr. H.—Hulloa!

Mrs. H.—(leaning forward and touching his arm) My dear boy. (In a voice of deepest sympathy.) I didn't think you'd have any appetite. (Looks toward Miss W. and Mr. P., who are cooing to each other.) To think you might have been like them—two love birds.

Carr.—(looking toward them) I beg of you—

Mrs. H.—Belinda's cruel!

Mr. H.—Well, well, there are women in the world who aren't.

Carr.—Yes.

Mrs. H.—Attractive women.

Carr.—(in the same monotone) Yes.

Mr. H.—Clever women.

Carr.—Yes.

(Enter A. M. with cream and some cake.)

Mrs. H.—(slyly) Close at hand.

Carr.—Y—yes.

(A. M. starts filling cups, going first to Mr. H.)

Mr. H.—A good strong cup for me, my dear. No sugar. No milk. (She attends him. Passes on to Mrs. H.)

Mrs. H.—Mine—very weak. (A. M. mixes it.) I don't generally take it at noon, but—

Mr. H.—(seeing A. M. is flustered) Hush, Lucy, it will do you good.

(A. M. looks toward Miss W.)

Mr. H.—(in a whisper) Don't bother with them, my dear. They are in Venice, drinking red wine.

(A. M. passes on to Carr.)

A. M.—And you, Mr. Carrington?

Carr.—Just cream, if you please. (She pours cream)

A. M.—Say when—

(*He is looking into her face. Suddenly she looks up and they stare into each other's eyes while the cream overflows the cup and the saucer and the table and the boarders watch spellbound as the curtain falls.*)

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